DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 076 592 SP 006 543

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TITLE	Effect of a School-Within-A-School Program on Attitudes of Underachieving Students.
PUB DATE	[72]
NOTE	10p.
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	Individualized Instruction; Low Achievement Factors; *Low Achievers; *School Organization; Student Alienation; *Student Attitudes; Student Behavior; *Student Motivation; Success Factors; *Team Teaching

ABSTRACT

This study was made to determine if there is a difference in attitudes between average IQ but low achievers in two different school settings. The study was conducted with students in a northern Illinois school which features a school-within-a-school as well as a traditional setting. A questionnaire was administered. This study seems to indicate correlation between pleasant school and happiness but not between happiness and success. Better attitudes, higher feelings of success, and a greater feeling that the learning was useful in the school-within-a-school was indicated. (A copy of the questionnaire is included.) (Author)

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ED 076592

EFFECT OF A SCHOOL-WITHIN-A-SCHOOL PROGRAM ON ATTITUDES OF UNDERACHIEVING STUDENTS

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Abstract

This study was to determine if there is a difference in attitudes between average IQ but low achievers in two different school settings. This study was conducted on the students in a northern Illinois school which features a school-within-a-school as well as a traditional approach. A questionnaire was administered and is included in the study. This study seems to indicate correlation between pleasant school and happiness, but not between happiness and success. Better attitudes, higher feelings of success, and a greater feeling that the learning was useful in the school-within-a-school was indicated.

SP 006 543

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The purpose of this study is to determine if there is a difference between the attitudes toward school of seventh grade students with an average or above average I.Q., but low achievement in a "school-within-a-school" program and the same type of student in a traditional program. A second purpose is to see if there is significant correlation between these attitudes. For the remainder of this paper, students with an average or above average I.Q. but low achievement, will be referred to as "underachieving".

The "school-within-a-school" plan is a type of team teaching arrangement. It is also referred to as "the house plan" or "the little school". These arrangements have been employed in junior and senior high schools for many years in an attempt to bring to a large school some of the natural advantages of a small school, such as the continuing contact with a few students, the ease with which teachers learn the backgrounds of students, and the "family" atmosphere. (Van Til, 6:214-220).

The plan calls for subdividing a large school into several little schools. Each little school occupies a specific section of the building and has its own faculty. School-within-a-school staff members know each other and their students well. They may pool their knowledge about a particular student and hence provide more individualized instruction and better guidance. This plan fosters cooperative planning and mutual concern for students so essential in team operations. (Van Til, 6:215-216).

> Definitive research on the affect of team teaching is not yet available. Existing research suffers from many inadequacies, and unfortunately many schools fail to explore the research possibilities in their experiments with team teaching.

> About all that can be said at present about the results of experience with team teaching is that teachers, students, and their parents are generally favorable, and student achievement usually equals or slightly exceeds that expected under more conventional arrangements. The effects of team teaching on goals other than achievement are, as yet, largely undetermined. (Van Til, 6:220).

The hypothesis of this study is that underachieving students in the school-within-a-school program would have more favorable attitudes toward school than the underachieving students in the traditional program. Correlations between each item of a teacher developed questionnaire, should indicate a relationship between happiness in school and a feeling of success.

The sampling procedure used was as follows: at the end of the 1971-1972 school year, the sixth grade teachers in each of the elementary schools that feed students into Washington Junior High School, School District 129, Aurora (West), were asked to identify underachieving students in their classrooms. This list was augmented by names submitted by counselors and social workers. The recommended students then had their files inspected for background information and I.Q. scores. Those students that had average or above average I.Q.'s, but low achievement, were selected. The students were usually low to middle class Anglo-Saxons with poor home backgrounds. The final selection was made by the school-within-a-school teachers. Out of the forty-seven students finally chosen, thirty-three were placed in the school-within-a-school program. The remaining students acted as a control group in the traditional program. Every effort was made to obtain a cross section from severe to mildly disfunctioning students for both groups.

Washington Junior High School has an enrollment of 987 students.

There are twelve classes of the seventh grade with an average class size of twenty-nine. The thirty-three disfunctioning students, as well as seventy-six pupils randomly selected from the remaining population of incoming seventh graders, formed four of these classes. These four classes made up the school-within-a-school (experimental) group. Four back-to-back class times were used to teach science, English, social studies, and mathematics. Five teachers, one for each subject plus a counselor, that acted as team leader and resource room teacher, were in charge of the program. One period of each school day was a common meeting time for all five teachers to plan methods and discuss individual students. Positive behavior modification, flexible scheduling, and individualized instruction were used whenever possible.

Traditional classroom teachers have no group meeting time, do not have access to a resource room or teacher, and do not have four classes in common. However, the number of disfunctioning students in each traditional class was lower.

After thirteen weeks, a teacher developed questionnaire was administered to all identified disfunctioning students both in the school-within-a-school and traditional programs. The items were about various feelings or attitudes the students had toward school. The choices for each of the eight items were arranged in a Likert scale of one to five with one as the low or undesired response. (See Appendix, page 6).

Some possible confounding variables of this type of testing are pointed out by James Lewis. "It is difficult to determine what a student really feels or believes because he is not sure of his own feelings and opinions. It is also quite possible that when the student is examined

about his feelings, he may give answers which he thinks the teacher wants while, in reality, the student does not feel that way at all." (Lewis, 5:120). However, he goes on to state that "the attitudes a student carries with him will have an effect on his ability to learn. Therefore, no longer can schools neglect this highly important area. (Lewis, 5:115).

Another drawback to this particular research is the short time of thirteen weeks working with students before the testing that is being reported in this paper. A second test should be conducted at the end of the school year. In addition, one must question how much impact school has on the child compared to the home. According to Gauerke "the social development of the child takes place outside the school and under the influence of the home long before the pupil and teacher face each other. However, poor home treatment of the child (owing to a variety of emotional, economic, and physical factors in the environment) may be reflected in poor school adjustment. (Gauerke, 2:277).

T-tests of scores for each item comparing the traditional (control) and the school-within-a-school (experimental) group were run on a computer at Northern Illinois University. Differences were noted in two areas. The t-value for the item on feeling of success in school was -1.37, and -1.94 on how useful the students felt their learning was. The computer calculated a two-tailed probability for these items as .178 and .059 respectively. This indicates that for forty-seven degrees of freedom, the probability that the results are a function of chance are 178 out of 1000 and 59 out of 1000. (See Table 1).

Correlations run on each item for the entire group (experimental

and control), indicated a strong relationship between how pleasant school was and happiness (.7452 significance .001) but the hypothesized correlation between happiness and success was not strongly indicated (.3144 significance .014). (See Table 2).

Interpretation of results seems to point out that the school-within-a-school teaching plan probably promoted the higher feeling of success and greater feeling that the learning was useful for the students.

SCHOOL QUESTIONNAIRE

1. How successful do you feel in school?

Very Successful	Successful	Average	Somewhat Successful	Very Unsuccessful

2. How friendly is school?

Very Friendly	Friendly	Average	Somewhat Lonely	Very Lonely

3. How useful do you find your learning?

Very Useful	Useful	Average	Somewhat Useful	Very Useless

4. How fast do you learn?

Very Fast	Fast	Average	Somewhat Slow	Very Slow

5. How pleasant do you find school?

Very Pleasant	Pleasant	Average	Somewhat Boring	Very Boring

6. How difficult do you find school?

Very Difficult	Difficult	Average	Somewhat Easy	Very Easy

7. How smart do you feel in school?

Very Smart	Smart	Average	Somewhat Foolish	Very Foolish

8. How happy are you in school?

Very Happy	Happy	Average	Somewhat Sad	Very Sad

Table 1

T-tests for Control and Experimental Groups
on Each Questionnaire Item

Variable		Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error	t-value	2-tail Prob.
1.	Control	3.0625	0.854	0.231	-1.37	0.178
	Experiment	3.2626	0.653	0.114		
2.	Control	3.8750	1.147	0.287	0.55	0.584
	Experiment	3.6970	1.015	0.177		
3.	Control	3.6250	0.885	0.221	-1.94	0.059
	Experiment	4.1212	0.820	0.143		
4.	Control	3.0000	0.365	0.091	-0.89	0.375
	Experiment	3.1818	0.769	0.134		
5.	Control	3.3750	1.360	0.340	-0.90	0.372
	Experiment	3.6970	1.075	0.187		
6.	Control	3.1875	0.834	0.209	0.03	0.980
	Experiment	3.1818	0.683	0.119		
7.	Control	3.0625	0.680	0.170	0.19	0.847
	Experiment	3.0303	0.467	0.081		
8.	Control	3.6875	1.078	0.270	-0.60	0.549
	Experiment	3.8788	1.023	0.178		

(47 Degrees of Freedom)

Table 2

Correlations Between Items on School Attitude Questionnaire

To use table 2, find one item on horizontal scale and a second on the vertical scale. The intersection of the two scales is the correlation coefficient between those two items.

	Item One	Item Two	Item Three	Item Four	Item Five	Item Six	Item Seven	Item Eight
Item One	1.000	.1679	.2156	.2749	.4220	.0634	-.0812	.3144
Item Two	.1679	1.000	.3553	.2819	.5262	.1964	.0180	.4750
Item Three	.2156	.3553	1.000	.4431	.1889	.1779	.0931	.3174
Item Four	.2749	.2819	.4431	1.000	.3862	.1248	.2183	.2755
Item Five	.4220	.5262	.1889	.3862	1.000	.3347	.0270	.7452
Item Six	.0634	.1964	.1779	.1248	.3347	1.000	.1402	.3230
Item Seven	-.0812	.0180	.0931	.2183	.0270	.1402	1.000	-.0985
Item Eight	.3144	.4750	.3174	.2755	.7452	.3230	-.0985	1.000

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